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Officials acting arrogantly

Politicians, that is anyone who is elected to office, are generally cagey about what they say in public. Even the elected officials with the most integrity are apt to take a moment to think before uttering a comment. There are two motivations for an elected official to use care in selecting words - the danger of leaving a mistaken impression and the danger of revealing too much.

Occasionally, even the most circumspect elected official will say something that indicates the official is less concerned about the commonweal than he or she is about exercising some sort of power.

In the 2004 Legislature, the debate over educational reform has deteriorated into a power struggle between the majority Democrats and the Republican governor. As time goes on, the political nature of the struggle becomes ever more apparent. Witness the comment made by Senate Education Committee Chairman Norman Sakamoto following a four-hour "informational briefing" on Gov. Linda Lingle's proposal to put a constitutional amendment allowing local school boards on this fall's ballot.

"At this point, the House didn't move it forward and we're not inclined to move it forward at this point." No one thought to ask Sakamoto whether he was using the royal "we" to refer to himself or the entire Senate. One suspects the former.

Another aspect to the educational reform debate is a kind of insider conceit. The most ardent defenders of the educational status quo include



top officials in the state Department of Education and the majority of the elected Board of Education, individuals who are privy to the inside workings of the state's educational system. Of course, all that inside information gives those who have it a much better understanding and comprehension of what is really a simple matter. Never mind the frustrations experienced at the school and classroom level, voters couldn't possibly make the right decision if given a chance to move school authority off Oahu and closer to home.

The way the Legislature is going, we'll never know. Voters deserve a chance to vote on local school boards. There would be ample opportunity to argue the merits before Nov. 2.

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